

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
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E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: PEOPLES CONFERENCE WINS MIZORAM ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

REF: A. NEW DELHI 6780 (CALCUTTA 732), B. CALCUTTA 859 (NOTAL)

1. THE PEOPLES CONFERENCE, A RELATIVELY NEW AND MODERATE
REGIONAL PARTY, HAS WON AN OUTRIGHT MAJORITY IN ELECTIONS TO THE
30-SEAT ASSEMBLY OF MIZORAM, A REMOTE UNION TERRITORY IN NORTH-
EAST INDIA. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, THE PEOPLES CONFERENCE
HAS CAPTURED 21 OF THE 27 SEATS DECLARED THUS FAR, ANOTHER FOUR
SEATS GOING TO THE MIZO CONGRESS AND ONE SEAT EACH TO THE MIZO
JANATA AND AN INDEPENDENT. TEHNPHUNGA SAILO, A RETIRED BRIGA-
DIER OF THE INDIAN ARMY AND LEADER OF THE PEOPLES CONFERENCE,
IS EXPECTED TO BECOME CHIEF MINISTER.

2. THE MAY 17-20 ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS ARE ONLY THE SECOND TO BE
HELD IN LARGELY-TRIBAL MIZORAM SINCE THE UNION TERRITORY WAS
CREATED IN 1971. THE ELECTIONS WERE RIVRHT#AGAINST THE BACKGROUND
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OF THE LONG-SIMMERING NSURGENCY IN THE AREA LED BY THE MIZO NATION-
AL FRONT OF LALDenga. THE ELECTIONS ALSO APPEARED NOT TO BE CONN-
ECTED WITH THE STATE OF PLAY AMONG THE NATIONAL PARTIES AT THE ALL-
INDIA LEVEL, SINCE NONE OF THE CONTESTING PARTIES IN MIZORAM HAVE
LINKS WITH THESE ALL-INDIA PARTIES. THE MIZO CONGRESS, WHICH LED
THE UNION TERRITORY'S FIRST FREELY-ELECTED GOVT
FROM 1972 TO 1977, WAS LOOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE CONGRESS

PARTY, BUT THIS TIE BECAME PROGRESSIVELY MORE TENUOUS FOLLOWING THE CONGRESS' 1977 ELECTORAL SETBACKS AND ITS SUBSEQUENT SPLIT.

3. THE MAJOR ELECTORAL APPEAL OF THE PEOPLES CONFERENCE WAS "PEACE FIRST". ITS CONVINCING SUCCESS IN THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IS REGARDED HERE AS A CLEAR INDICATION BY THE MIZOS OF THEIR DESIRE FOR A SETTLEMENT OF THE INSURGENCY ISSUE. REBEL LEADER LALDENGHA HAS BEEN ENGAGED IN SPORADIC NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GOI TO PUT INTO EFFECT THE JULY 1976 ACCORD BETWEEN THE CENTER AND THE MIZO NATIONAL FRONT. ULTIMATELY, HOWEVER, THE GOI BECAME EXASPERATED BY WHAT IT CONSIDERED TO BE LALDENGHA'S STALLING TACTICS (DESIGNED TO LEAD TO HIS INSTALLATION AS CHIEF MINISTER) AND PROCEEDED TO CALL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. THE MIZO NATIONAL FRONT DECLINED TO PARTICIPATE IN THESE ELECTIONS. NOW THAT THE MORE MODERATE PEOPLES GOVT, LALDENGHA MAY FIND HIMSELF IN A GREATLY WEAKENED BARGAINING POSITION WITH THE CENTER.

4. INITIAL REACTION IN DELHI HAS WELCOMED THE VICTORY OF THE PEOPLES CONFERENCE. THE DELHI PRESS HAS NOTED BRIGADIER SAILO'S STATEMENT AT A PRESS CONFERENCE THAT THE PEOPLES CONFERENCE WAS COMMITTED TO BRING PEACE TO THE AREA, UPHOLD THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF THE INDIAN UNION AND WORK TOWARDS NATIONAL UNITY. SAILO IS REPUTED TO HAVE LINKS WITH THE MORE MODERATE ELEMENTS IN THE MIZO UNDERGROUND. IN LIGHT OF THIS, THERE IS HOPE IN DELHI THAT THE NEW MIZORAM GOVT WILL ACT AS AN EFFECTIVE INTERMEDIARY IN BRINGING ABOUT A FINAL SETTLEMENT OF THE INSURGENCY

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GOHEEN

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED.

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